

Submitting a Map to the Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission

from the commission's adopted operating guidelines, July 2011

In anticipation that individuals or organizations might wish to submit redistricting plans to the commission for its consideration, the commission adopted the following procedures to guide those interested in providing this type of public comment.

The commission accepts redistricting plans drawn by individual citizens or organizations. If the commission wishes to use a publicly submitted plan as one of the several upon which it will seek public comment in a series of hearings, the plan must be offered for consideration by at least one member of the commission. If the commission receives a large number of publicly submitted plans, it may hold an initial meeting to narrow the number of maps it will use for the public hearings.

Publicly submitted plans must comply with federal and state redistricting laws. Plans must be accompanied by current contact information (contact name, address, telephone number, e-mail address) for the entity making the submission. The commission encourages entities to submit maps that follow census geographic boundaries and to include with any maps documentation of the total population and minority population for each proposed district. Although the commission must consider the statewide impact of any local or regional map, the commission will accept partial local or regional maps.

To comply with the commission's mandatory criteria on population equality, each submitted plan must include a written explanation for each district of the mandatory and/or discretionary criteria that justify any deviation from the ideal population.

The commission will use Maptitude for Redistricting by the Caliper Corporation as its software for redistricting. Because GIS-based redistricting plans submitted electronically must be imported into this software, the commission requires that computer-drafted plans be submitted as equivalency files giving the census block to district assignments. These files may be submitted in .dat, .dbf., .txt, or .shp files. Electronically submitted plans must be based on official Census geography (TIGER line) and PL 94-171 data.

Although the commission encourages entities to submit electronic files, it will accept paper submissions. Staff will contact each organization or individual submitting a plan to verify authenticity. In addition to checking the submitted maps for accuracy and completeness (all blocks are assigned), staff may make nonsubstantive changes to ensure that the maps are consistent (district lines don't jump back and forth over highways or rivers with no population gains).

All plans submitted to the commission become part of the public record and are open to any member of the public.